

Checkers helps to plant the seeds of hope in KwaDukuza

Louis Meyer and Simon Kwesaba are two community heroes who come from very different backgrounds, but who have been united by a single vision for almost two decades.

Meyer is a passionate community activist who lives in middle-class Durban while Kwesaba is a pastor who works in Shakaville near KwaDukuza. “We originally met through the township’s Dutch Reformed Church more than 15 years ago,” explains Meyer.

“We saw the problems confronting the local community and decided that we had to step in and help solve them.” Since then, the two friends have been working tirelessly to support the most vulnerable and impoverished members of the KwaDukuza community – and their efforts are paying off.

Meyer and Kwesaba began by opening a crèche for local orphans. To feed them, they also established the Seed of Hope food garden. Over the years, the garden developed into a formally registered, 10-member co-operative feeding around 300 people every week. But despite their collective achievements, the co-op members realised that they needed to reinforce their skills and their infrastructure to produce a larger and more diversified crop. But sourcing funds was becoming increasingly difficult and morale among co-op members began to flag.

Then, in September 2016, Checkers reached out to the team at Seed of Hope and facilitated a series of practical farming workshops, including planting techniques. Trees and seeds were planted to increase crop diversity, whilst Checkers also funded the installation of a water tank and irrigation system as well as much-needed kitchen equipment.

Today the morale at Seed of Hope is booming and its food garden is flourishing. In addition to beetroot and cabbage, the garden now also produces spinach and chillies. This means Seed of Hope is able to provide people from the local community – especially children attending its after-school feeding programme – with more nutritious and varied food all

year round. Better still, the revenue that co-op members are earning from selling their surplus produce to the community is making a huge difference to their lives.

“The support we receive from Checkers has had a very positive impact on everyone here,” says Meyer. “The fact that our members are now able to make a living from the garden, rather than relying on hand-outs, has given them a real sense of pride. We’re all standing a lot taller these days. Empowering people to become self-reliant is helping to create a sustainable asset for everyone in the community.”

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